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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Foundation for the Rights of the Family, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 23 1).

2. "Productive work and employment are central elements of development as well as decisive elements of human identity. Sustained economic growth and sustainable development as well as the expansion of productive employment should go hand in hand" (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (chap. 3, para. 42)).

The right to employment

3. Full employment and a decent standard of living for all are fundamental goals, and it is the responsibility of the State to promote their attainment. The International Labour Organization's guiding principle is the promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights.

4. Under contemporary globalization, international labour has increased, while levels of exploitation have accelerated. Lack of legal protection for migrant workers heightens the possibility of their being used as instruments for maintaining competitiveness because they are obliged to work in situations where decent work conditions are not enforced.

Employment and the family

5. The family, as the oldest unit of human organization, is part of the continuity of humanity and a major link between generations; it is a unique community of persons, with their functions, rights and duties, as well as an emotional, educational, cultural, civic, economic and social reality. Families transmit the message and lessons of history and play an important part in its evolution.

6. Society is responsible for guaranteeing the family the sufficient resources to cope with their tasks, such as: legislation and other norms which regulate the relations between family members and the family and society, various financial support measures and basic services such as a child care system, health care and educational system.

7. The greatest cause of poverty in the family is unemployment. In fact, employment is the key factor in integration into society, and in preventing exclusion. The families most at risk from poverty are those with no earner, or only one earner. The personal and social impacts of unemployment on families include poverty, financial hardship, and homelessness. Unemployment puts large numbers of children at risk and transmits poverty across generations.

8. It is therefore important to give everyone, from the youngest age, the maximum of chances for finding employment. The exercise of family responsibilities by women and their inequal

distribution between the two partners, must not be a discriminatory factor at the moment of recruitment. In many cases, women suffer from the lack of recognition given to their work in the household, since domestic tasks remain invisible and are accorded no monetary value in society.

9. Flexible hours should be afforded as a way to foster the sharing of domestic responsibilities by women and men alike; regulations on employment should be revised in order to help family members to cope with work and their family responsibilities. With this purpose, employers should take steps that would allow family members to better manage their work and family life and to ensure that leave to care for a family member on part-time working hours does not detrimentally affect job security, career prospects or pension entitlement.

A declaration on the family

10. For many years, nothing has been more at the centre of concern of Foundation for the Rights of the Family than a declaration on the functions, responsibilities and rights of the family. Societies worldwide recognize that the family has a number of social functions and responsibilities.

11. The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) implicitly recognizes the rights of the family, alongside its functions, in Chapter V of its Programme of Action entitled: "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structures". The explicit articulation of the responsibilities, functions and rights of the family can be a source of inspiration and a point of reference to support families and create family-friendly societies.

12. We, therefore, suggest that an open-ended working group be created within the Commission for Social Development, to review and extract relevant provisions on the family from national laws, international instruments and existing draft declarations.